

ENGLISH only

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE TOLERANCE FOUNDATION, RUSSIA.

OCSE CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM, JUNE 19, 2003.

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this high meeting. I have been working for the Foundation "Tolerance", Russia to develop and implement the teacher training and peer education programs for the Russian schools. While the Federal tolerance program in the Russian Federation is only reaching its practical stage, we have had substantial field experience. There are three points that I would like to share with you.

The Russian Tolerance education scene is critically different in large cities and in the periphery. In Moscow and other urban centers governmental and other tolerance education programs are being carried out and many school workers are involved. At the same time in smaller cities and in the countryside, which are most infected by Anti-Semitism and prejudice, stay outside of the process. For the teachers we have worked with the word "tolerance" is completely unfamiliar. The concept itself is unknown.

Teacher training should not start with methods and pedagogical techniques, but with developing tolerant views in educators themselves. Teachers are one of the most economically suffering group in the modern Russia. We have been shocked by the level of Anti-Semitism and intolerance displayed by the teachers at our seminars. The participants were regularly blaming the Jews for Russia's poor economic and political situation, and this is at the tolerance seminar! This imposes the terrible effect on the whole curriculum content, especially on what this people teach in social studies.

Tolerance education will not be effective until there is a mechanism to eliminate anti-Semitism from each school's daily practice. There are incidents, where school's administrators were reported to adopt discriminatory practices or to make politically incorrect statements.

Our recommendations:

- to make sure that the Governmental tolerance program will reach the population of the Russian periphery. Due to the size of our country, this can not be achieved without co-operation with the NGO's
- in the context of teacher training programs, to make an emphasis on developing tolerant views in educators
- to adopt mechanisms of eliminating anti-Semitic practices, such as discrimination or politically incorrect public statement from schools' everyday life and teaching

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